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metals or alloys of different degrees of hardness, or, perhaps, even from ivory, and other elastic substances, an instrument may hereafter be manufactured which shall possess considerable power in a small compass, and which might be purchased at a very moderate price.

No. II.

PAINTING IN WATER-COLOURS.

The GOLD ISIS MEDAL was presented to Mr. C. J. ROBERTSON, of Worton House, Isleworth, for his Improvements in the Art of Painting in Water-colours.

*Worton House, Isleworth,
April 10, 1829.*

SIR,

IN the hope of being useful to the lovers of painting, I send you a specimen of a method of painting in water-colours, the result of experiments pursued for some years, in the hope of enabling water-colours in some measure to compete with oil. How far I have succeeded in giving the force and brilliancy of an oil picture, the Society of Arts will be enabled to judge from this copy of the splendid picture of Titian in the National Gallery: but my method possesses some peculiar advantages in a durability and facility of cleaning, I do not hesitate to assert, superior to oil, and in pictures painted in this manner not requiring a glass, as it may be cleaned with alcohol at any time, or as often as it may please, without the slightest injury; and every one knows, who is at all

acquainted with the subject, that alcohol will instantly and entirely remove any dirt that a picture may be subject to, but is used with considerable danger to paintings in oil. I have paintings by me, which have been painted several years, exposed to light and air, and which have not undergone the slightest change; and the method may be applied to painting on a much larger scale, with, I have no doubt, equal success.

The painting before you (a copy of the Bacchus and Ariadne by Titian) is painted on what is called Bristol board or paper, attached with glue or paste to canvass, which is again effectually protected from the action of the atmosphere, known to corrode the canvass of oil paintings, and also from injury arising from humidity, by attaching tinfoil to the back. After drawing in the outline purely and carefully (by purely, I mean in a single, clean, and sharp line,) with a black-lead pencil rather hard, that the black lead may not disturb the purity of the colours, I wet the paper all over with water in which a small quantity of ox-gall is dissolved, and then lay a foundation tint of finely-ground blue-black,* (with the usual proportion of gum,) to represent the shadows and half tints, laying them on in succession, carefully adhering to the contours, without softening their edges,—the first tints rather faint, and covering all but the extreme lights; after I have laid in several gradations, I take a large soft brush and plenty of water, and wash off as much as will come away, taking care always to leave the lights clean; I repeat this, washing in and washing out, till the shadows *appear* as strong as

* For the satyrs and browner figures I used Vandyke brown, and the colours may be sepia, or any other that may suit the picture; but I think these three will answer any purpose.

the picture is intended to be, and no more will wash off: the half tints ought to be much stronger than may appear necessary, as they lose their apparent depth of tone in a remarkable degree when the other colours are applied. When the foundation tints are nearly dry, I then lay on the carnation tints of the flesh with *madder lake*,* which is perfectly durable, and wash off in the same manner till it is not to be removed by washing; when these are strong enough, I wash on, in a very dilute state, yellow (stone) ochre, or raw terra di Sienna, in the brown flesh burnt terra di Sienna: this, if done decidedly, and with sufficient force, will bring the flesh nearly to its effect; the stronger shadows are given with Vandyke brown, burnt umber, or raw umber, mixed with madder purple, madder brown, or Indian red, according to circumstances: these last need not be washed off again. When I have got the whole picture to as much force as can be got in the usual way, the whole drawing should be washed over with a thin solution of gum tragacanth† in water, with a large brush: in doing this, care must be taken not to repeat the stroke in the same place till it is dry, and not to leave it in puddles any where, as that will occasion a streakiness. The best way of doing it is to put it on in parallel strokes, the latter always just touching the edge of the former; this may be repeated several times, allowing the paper to dry in the intervals, and affords an excellent surface for working on, and will bring out the colours in a surprising degree, without giving the smeared appearance, like the traces of snails, that gum arabic gives. The picture must be worked up to its greatest strength, always

* For the flesh of women and young persons—for others, Indian red and Venetian red.

† It is better to add a small quantity of gum arabic.

covering it with the solution of gum tragacanth till it appears finished; it must then be varnished over with a solution, in spirit of wine, of isinglass, previously soaked in distilled water. This will increase the strength, brilliancy, and durability; and as dry isinglass is not soluble in spirit of wine except at the boiling temperature, it is clear that it may be cleaned with cold alcohol with impunity. The trees in the specimen are painted in body colour, to shew how capable they are of being united, and any part of the picture might have been painted in body colour; in general, I paint all except the flesh in body colour, varnishing it first with the solution of tragacanth, and finally with isinglass. By using all the colours separately and unmixed except for the dark shadows, the colours appear so much brighter, that none of the bright colours that are at all doubtful need be used: in this drawing, with exception of the madder colours, they are all earths, no yellow brighter than yellow ochre being necessary. The lights will thus always maintain their purity, and the darks their full depth, which is not the case in oil, where the former grow darker and the latter become mealy; the varnish necessary to bring out the darks again becomes gradually opaque, and must, after a time, be taken off with considerable danger to the picture, even in skilful hands.

This method is, therefore, particularly calculated for perpetuating valuable pictures in copies, as I am thoroughly persuaded it undergoes no change at all. I shall be happy to give any further explanations, either personally or by letter, and remain,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

A. AIKIN, *Esq.*

Secretary, &c. &c.

CHARLES JOHN ROBERTSON.